

***Why Not Field Hockey?***

**An Honors Thesis (HONR 499)**

**By**

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## **Abstract**

Field hockey is one of the most popular sports in the world but does not have the same following in the United States that it does in other countries. I examine the history of the sport, the demographics, the opportunities for potential growth, and the skills and benefits that come with it. I share my experience with the sport as well. I delve into every aspect of the sport as well as every level in order to give the reader full comprehension of what the sport entails. My research shows that field hockey has a deep history and the opportunity to become more predominant in the United States if more people become educated and passionate about the sport.

## **Acknowledgments**

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### *Process Analysis Statement*

I began my research by looking at field hockey as a whole then narrowing it down to specific aspects of the sport. I came up with most of the sections I wanted to focus on before I actually began my research, but I added sections as I learned more and more about the sport. It was challenging for me to narrow down which parts I believed were important for the readers to know about the sport. Because field hockey has been such a huge part of my life, this thesis holds a lot of importance to me. I learned things about the sport that made me value it so much more. Being from the Midwest and going to school in an area where field hockey is not predominant, I hope this thesis can educate people on what field hockey is. There are a lot of people that disregard field hockey as a sport, but it is important to me that people educate themselves on what it is before they make judgments, and I think my research can help people learn. It helped show me that I can make a difference in the field hockey community and that I can have an impact on its growth.



## ***Introduction***

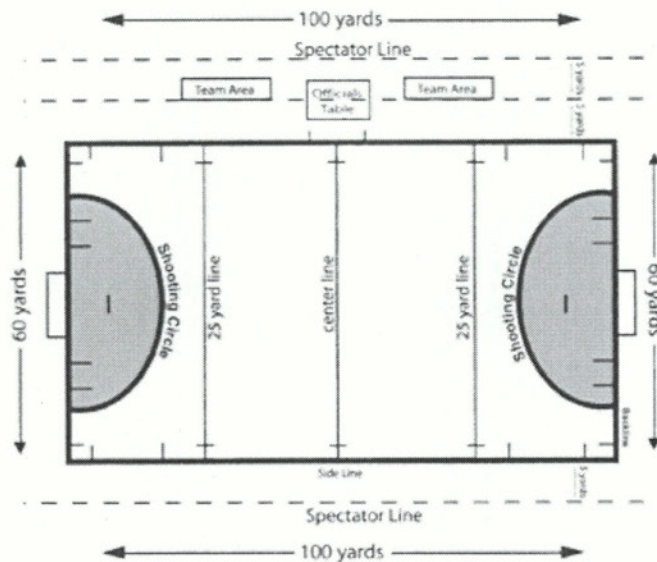
“What’s field hockey?” A question that comes without fail anytime I mention I am a member of the field hockey team, especially in Indiana. At times the question can get old. Other times, I take it as an opportunity to educate people on the underrated sport that is field hockey. When I began playing field hockey 8 years ago, it was completely new to me too. Throughout my years of learning the game, I have gained a new appreciation for the sport and look forward to seeing its growth in the future.

Worldwide, field hockey has a strong following with dedicated fans invested in their national teams as well as club teams. The United States does not have nearly as many devoted fans as some countries do, but USA Field Hockey is working to change that. With multiple sporting options to choose from, field hockey is a unique game that helps participants gain many skills they can utilize on and off the field. With the potential to grow, the resources to do so, and the unlimited benefits that come from the sport, you must ask yourself, “why not field hockey?”

## ***How It’s Played***

Field hockey is an outdoor sported played with two opposing teams each having ten field players and a goalie. It requires a combination of speed, endurance, footwork, and stick skills. The field is 100 yards long by 60 yards wide with lines at the half and each 25-yard mark. It is either played on synthetic turf or grass. Typically, the more elite programs play on a water- based turf, which allows the ball to roll faster and more consistently. Most high school teams in the United States still play the game on grass. The time frame of the game also changes depending on the level of play. In high school, teams usually play two 30- minute halves with a 10-minute halftime break. At the college level, the time is increased to two 35- minute halves with a 10-minute halftime, and at the international level, the game is broken into four 15- minute quarters

("FIH Announces Format Change"). The object of the game is to score the most goals within the time frame, while keeping the other team out of your defensive half. Each team has a goal, 12 feet wide by 7 feet tall, and in order to score, the attacker must touch the ball inside the circle, "a semicircle extending 16 yards from each goal line" ("The History").



The formation of each team depends on the coach, but all teams have defenders, midfielders, attackers, and a goalie. Each player has a stick ranging from about 36 to 38 inches with a flat side and a curved side; players are only allowed to use the flat side of the stick.

Sticks are normally made out of fiberglass, Kevlar, and carbon ("The History"). Field hockey is either played with a ball that has a cork core covered with a plastic shell, or solid plastic balls that weigh between 5.5 to 5.75 ounces and have a circumference of 8.75 to 9.25 inches (Grant). Field players wear shin guards and mouth guards and are not allowed to touch the ball with their feet. Goalies, on the other hand, wear thick pads and are allowed to stop the ball from going into the goal with any part of their bodies.

There are many fouls in a field hockey game, which can be hard to follow if one is not familiar with the sport. The most common ones are obstruction, hacking, and foot calls. If a player is not moving the ball and uses his or her body to shield the ball that is obstruction and the other team receives possession of the ball. Hacking, although not always intentional, is when a player tries to win the ball by hitting their stick against their opponent's stick. If the ball hits a player's foot and gains them benefit, the whistle is blown, and the other team gains possession. After an umpire blows his or her whistle to signal a foul, the other team can restart the ball by either self- dribbling or passing from where the foul occurred. The rules of field hockey are difficult to comprehend at first, but the more games one watches, the easier it is to understand and follow the game.

### ***History of Field Hockey***

Variations of field hockey date back thousands of years, but the field hockey we know now came to be in the mid-18th century. Illustrations dating back to the Ancient Egyptians portray games that have a similar style to modern field hockey. Examples of these were "discovered on Beni-Hasen tomb in the Nile Valley in Egypt depicting the beginnings of the sport" ("All About Field Hockey"). The growth of modern field hockey can be attributed to the growth of the public education system in England in the early 19th century. "Field hockey," which is known simply as hockey in most countries, was played at English public schools. At this time, the sport was only played by men because it was deemed far too dangerous for women to play. Women's hockey eventually became popular in the late 19th century and saw rapid growth in many countries.

Field hockey made its Olympic debut in the 1908 London Games with England, Ireland, Scotland, Wales, Germany, and France all competing, and England ultimately winning the gold.



The following Olympic Games, field hockey was dropped because the host nation of Sweden was given the option of whether or not to include it. The sport made its reappearance in the 1920 Olympics games in Antwerp only to be removed once again in the 1924 Games ("Hockey Basics").

Driven by its exclusion from the 1924 Olympics, the International Hockey Federation (FIH) was formed later the same year. The federation represented both men's and women's hockey and included Austria, Belgium, Czechoslovakia, France, Hungary, Spain and Switzerland ("Hockey Basics"). Because of the work of the FIH, hockey gained re- entry into the Olympics in 1928 and has remained a staple ever since.

A separate federation was formed to help foster the growth of women's hockey in 1927, the International Federation of Women's Hockey Associations (IFWHA). Women's hockey was finally added into the Olympics in the 1980 games, and with the help of the IFWHA, six countries competed with Zimbabwe being the eventual champion. ("Hockey Basics"). In 1982, the International Hockey Federation and the International Federation of Women's Hockey Associations combined to form the FIH that we still have today. The current "International Hockey Federation consists of five Continental Associations, 132 National Associations and is still growing" ("Hockey Basics").

### ***History of the Sport in the United States***

Unlike other countries where field hockey is popular among both men and women, field hockey in the United States is predominantly played by women. Field hockey was introduced to the United States in 1901 by an English woman named Constance Applebee. Applebee came to America to study abroad at Harvard University and was surprised to see the types activities American women did for exercise. She ended up teaching her classmates the sport of field



hockey and was later asked to teach women at other universities (“All About”). Applebee was a trailblazer for the sport and “she spread the game to Vassar, Wellesley, Holyoke, Radcliffe, and Bryn Mawr Colleges” (“The History of Field Hockey”). By the 1920s, the sport spread to even more universities, clubs were beginning to form, and it was played by the younger generation in schools.

In 1922, the United States Field Hockey Association was formed. This organization helped with the awareness and spread of the sport in the United States. Eight years later in 1930, the Field Hockey Association of America was formed as the committee supporting the men’s game. The two associations merged in 1993 to form the USFHA, which is still the current organization recognized by the Olympic Committee (“The History of Field Hockey”).

### ***Growing the Game***

The mission is simple: “Grow the Game. Serve Members. Succeed Internationally” (“USA Field Hockey”). USA Field Hockey is doing just that in order to help field hockey succeed in the United States. Unfortunately, the Sports & Fitness Industry Association’s 2015 Trends in U.S. Team Sports Report showed that field hockey experienced a 15.5% decline in participation amongst 6-17 year olds. (Bolling). USA Field Hockey is putting together the necessary programs in order to change that statistic. Their goal is to expose more people to the game, get sticks in their hand, and develop them into successful players.

Right now, field hockey does not see a lot of diversity amongst its participants. In August of 2016, there were a total of 24,843 USA Field Hockey membership holders with 17,207 of them being white (Bolling). The reality of this issue is that field hockey is offered in predominately wealthier areas and is only played by children who can afford it. It has little to no representation within cities and urban areas in the United States. 95% of members are also

women, which can be attributed back to field hockey's beginnings in the United States.

(Bolling) The National Development Director for USA Field Hockey, Sally Goggin, hopes to change this and make field hockey a more inclusive sport. Programs such as FUNdamentals and RISE International Clinics are helping children gain access to the game that normally would not.

### ***FUNdamental Program and RISE Clinics***

The FUNdamental Field Hockey Program allows participants to be exposed to the game with the proper guidance to become a stronger player and truly understand the game. This program is open to anyone who wants to bring field hockey to their area for boys, girls, and kids of all ages. The recipient of this grant receives a FUNdamental Field Hockey kit containing field hockey sticks (sized to fit your program's age group), balls, cones, a curriculum guide, and a carrying bag ("FUNdamental Field Hockey"). In the past, the program has been used by parents, teachers, players, and organizations to open up opportunities in field hockey no matter the geographical location or socioeconomic situation.

The RISE program is the next step up from the FUNdamental program and many times focuses on areas where the FUNdamental program was successful. The RISE instructional clinics allow beginners ages 11 and under to receive quality coaching and instruction from developing coaches in the area. The clinic is a single three hour session and costs \$75. The fee covers a USA Field Hockey U-12 Membership, coaching instruction, a T- Shirt, and a stick. If the participants already own a stick, they are encouraged to give the one they receive at the clinic to a peer in order for the game to have a broader reach ("RISE Clinics").

Through these programs and other playing opportunities, USA Field hockey is committed to its promise of growing the game for both boys and girls. They are willing to offer playing and development opportunities to any emerging areas with enthusiastic adults and children willing to



help them with their commitment ("USA Field Hockey"). Current players and coaches can help popularize the sport by donating equipment, teaching a friend, or coaching a clinic. USA Field Hockey is willing to help any community that is seeking an opportunity to learn and spread the game. They are trying to show that field hockey really is a sport for anyone as well as a sport for life. The groundwork has been set, and with the proper marketing mix and people, field hockey can become just as popular in the United States as it is worldwide.

### ***Futures Program***

Like many sports, field hockey has an Olympic Development Program. The Futures Program, established in 1990, aids players U-14, U-16, and U-19 in skill development and helps set them up for the next level whether it is college or the national team. It has helped raise the level of field hockey in the United States by offering the coaching and developmental opportunities necessary to shape better athletes, and about 5,000 high school athletes participate annually ("Futures"). The program is set up so they have training sights broken down between 9 regions of the United States: Northeast Region, New York, Pennsylvania, New Jersey, Chesapeake, South, Great Lakes, Central, and West ("Futures Regions"). Because field hockey is more predominant in the east, they have more Futures training sites to accommodate the amount of athletes. Athletes must sign- up for an individual trial and are tested by a coach or are recommended into the program in order to participate. If they are admitted, they will train at their specified regional site for 7 sessions from January to May. In late May or early June, each region hosts a Regional Futures Tournament where the Regional Team is selected. From there, the Regional Team competes at the National Futures Championship. Almost 700 of the best U-14, U-16, and U-17 female field hockey players compete in front of college coaches and the US selection committee ("Futures"). After the National Futures Championship, the top athletes are



chosen for programs such as the U.S. Women's Junior National Team and the AAU Junior Olympic Games ("Futures"). For some of the elite players, the Futures Program is the start of successful professional careers.

### ***NCAA Field Hockey***

The National Collegiate Athletic Association (NCAA) is a member-run association that values the success of college athletes while they are competing and in their future. Its members include 1,123 colleges and universities, 98 voting athletics conferences, and 39 affiliated organizations ("What is the NCAA?"). The NCAA makes the rules that athletic departments are required to follow, and the compliance departments at each university oversee that the teams adhere to the rules. Field hockey is one of the 24 sports sanctioned by the NCAA. It has a three-division setup: Division I, Division II, and Division III. It was added as an NCAA championship program in 1981. Each division has their own rules as well as their own NCAA National Championship.

#### ***Division I***

Under the NCAA, Division I schools are able to offer athletic scholarships to students. Most, but not all, Division I teams have 12 full scholarships available. Field hockey is an equivalency sport meaning that the coach can divide up the scholarship however he or she sees fit ("Athletic Scholarships"). There are currently 79 Division I schools competing in field hockey spanning 11 conferences across the United States. The NCAA Division I Field Hockey National Championship Tournament originally started out with only six teams, but now 19 teams qualify with four of those teams competing in a play-in game. Old Dominion University currently holds the title for the most Division I National Championship titles with nine followed closely by University of Maryland with eight.

## ***Division II***

Division II schools are also able to offer athletic scholarships to athletes, there are just less scholarships available. Division II teams typically have 6.3 scholarships available per team compared to 12 in Division I ("Athletic Scholarships"). These scholarships are allowed to be divided up amongst the players however the coach sees fit. There are currently 33 teams that compete in Division II field hockey. Six teams currently compete in the National Championship Tournament held in November of each year. Bloomsburg University has the most championships with 13 titles followed by Lock Haven with 5. The tournament made its debut in 1981 but was discontinued from 1984-1991. During those years, Division II teams competed in the Division III National Championship Tournament ("Division II Field Hockey"). It returned in 1992 and has been held every year since.

## ***Division III***

There are currently 165 teams that compete at the Division III level. NCAA Division III schools do not offer athletic scholarships, but athletes can apply for other forms of financial aid ("Athletic Scholarships"). There are 24 teams that compete in the NCAA Division III Field Hockey Championship. The winningest program to date is The College of New Jersey with 11 titles followed by Salisbury University with 5 titles ("DIII Field Hockey").

## ***High Performance***

High Performance is a program to develop and select athletes to play at the highest level on either the U.S. Developmental Squad or the U.S. National Team. Much like the Futures program, there are regional sites where athletes will train close to their homes or colleges. High Performance is open to enrolled collegiate athletes, post-collegiate athletes, and athletes

identified by USA Field Hockey ("High Performance"). Female athletes will train throughout April, May, and June at one of the 8 regional training sites, while the men train at one of 3 training sites set up for them. For the men, the High Performance Centers are open for training only. For the woman, this training will culminate in mid- June at the Young Women's National Championship at the Spooky Nook Training Center. Here, they will play at a high- level, internationally structured tournament where they have the opportunity to be selected for the U-21 U.S. Women's National Team, the U.S Women's National Development Squad, and the U.S. Women's National Team ("Young Women's National Championship"). Up to 144 players from each region and able to participate in the tournament, and each player is required to have a United States Passport.

## ***United States National Team***

### ***Women's Team***

With a demanding Olympic Development Program, being selected to join the U.S. National Team is a major feat. The United States won its last Olympic medal, a bronze, at the 1984 Los Angeles Olympic Games. Though the United States has not been seen as a powerhouse in the past, they are making immense strides to change that, and there is no better representation of that than their transformation from the 2012 to the 2016 Olympic Games.

At the 2012 Olympic Games, the U.S. Team had a very disappointing last place finish. That defeat motivated the organization to make changes to the program. For one thing, the team culture had to change. After hiring Craig Parnham, a former assistant coach for Great Britain, the team dynamic changed in a positive direction (Clarke). The players began to buy into the belief that they could be one of the best in the world, and they had to make the commitments and



sacrifices to make it happen. Parnham was not at all concerned with where the team had been in the past, just with where they could go in the future (Roenigk).

Another major change was the moving the Olympic Training Center from Chula Vista, California to Lancaster, Pennsylvania. Training in Southern California allowed for a lot more distractions than the Amish town of Lancaster. The Amish are driven by their values, commitments, and culture, and the national team hoped to replicate those ideals. Their ability to lead simpler lives in Lancaster allows them to focus on what really matters, standing on the Olympic podium. With two-thirds of the team being from Pennsylvania or New Jersey, the new location also had more of a community feel (Clarke). The new facility and home of USA Women's Field Hockey team is called Spooky Nook Sports. They offer facilities where you can play field hockey year round including a water based turf field inside of an inflatable dome as well as outdoor lighted turf fields ("Field Hockey Programs"). The United States was able to host test matches against Canada and India at Spooky Nook before they headed to Rio in 2016. Because field hockey is largely played on the East Coast, fans were able to rally around the team before their 2016 Olympic send-off.

In the 2016 Olympic Games, the U.S. women's team was placed in arguably the toughest bracket in the tournament, with number 2 ranked Argentina, number 3 ranked Australia, as well as Japan and Great Britain (Pugliese). They were able to defeat Argentina, Australia, and Japan, signifying a turning point in the program's history. Unfortunately they suffered losses to Great Britain and later lost to Germany to end their Olympic run. They ended up finishing fifth overall, much better than the previous Olympics but far from where they wanted to be.

After their 2016 Olympic run, head coach Craig Parnham stepped down from his position. He did not completely leave USA Field Hockey, as he is now the Director of Coach

Education and Learning. The new coach and former assistant, Janneke Schopman, took Parnham's place and hopes to continue the progress the team has made in the recent years. Schopman acknowledges that the 2016 Rio Olympics was just the beginning for that team, and there are still major strides to look forward to in the future (Pugliese).

### ***Men's Team***

Because of its unpopularity amongst males in the United States, the men's national team has suffered in international play. With that being said, they do have a bronze Olympic medal to their name. This medal came in the 1932 Games, the first for USA Field Hockey, when there were only three teams competing: India, Japan, and the United States. They went 0-2 in those Olympic Games and still came out with the bronze (Chase). The U.S. Men's National Team has actually competed in six Olympic Games and has never won a single game; their record in the Olympics is currently 0-22. The last two Olympics they qualified for were both hosted in the United States meaning they received automatic entry (Chase).

The failure of the Men's National Team can be attributed to the fact that males do not have their own clubs or college teams in the United States. If they want to play at a young age, they must play with the girls but are not allowed to compete with them at the high school level or up. There are three High Performance Training Centers for men as opposed to eight for women. Because of the lack of opportunities for males to play, they must compete internationally in European and Australian leagues (Feinberg).

Field hockey in the United States is one of the only sports where men are the ones that are at a disadvantage. While females can participate and are applauded for joining male football teams at their high schools, males are banned from playing on female high school field hockey teams. Most male field hockey players in the United States face discrimination for "playing a



girls' sport," when in reality men's field hockey is one of the most popular sports in other countries (Feinberg). Without more representation and opportunities for men around the United States, the program will continue to be inferior to that of other countries.

### ***Benefits of Field Hockey***

Although there are many sports for people to choose from, field hockey can be an attractive option and many people do not even realize why. Many people draw comparisons between field hockey and lacrosse, but the sport it shares the most tactical similarities with is soccer. Soccer is also one of the only sports that average more distance run per game than field hockey. Typically, midfielders and forwards cover the most ground per game than any other position in field hockey averaging about 9 kilometers or 5.6 miles per game at the international level. Defenders cover less ground per game coming in at 6- 7 kilometers or about 4 miles. Goalies do the least amount of running, required to cover the goal cage and within the circle, they run about 2 kilometers per game or a little over 1 mile ("So How Far Exactly..."). Because of the amount of running the sport requires, it comes with benefits such as boosted endurance, weight loss, and increased speed ("Top 10").

Field hockey is also an activity for all. Contrary to what most people believe, field hockey is very inclusive and can be played by all ages, genders, and skill levels. Anyone can pick up a stick and ball and play recreationally with friends. It is a great form of exercise without thinking about the fact that you are working out. The majority of the power in the field hockey comes from a player's legs, so playing promotes muscle strength and growth. The sport also requires overall coordination. One must run around carrying a stick while also dribbling and performing skills to beat defenders. This leads to better balance as well as hand- eye coordination. Hockey is said to burn approximately 0.061 calories per minute per pound of body



weight ("Top 10"). Field hockey is not just a fun and competitive activity; it also comes with a long list of benefits that can stay with you for life.

### ***Skills Learned***

Playing field hockey allows you to learn valuable skills that can be utilized both on and off of the field. Because field hockey is a team sport, participants are able to understand teamwork and its importance. Each team has eleven players on the field and even more on the sidelines; it is crucial for the entire team to be on the same page in order to be successful. Like any team in sports or in the workplace, there will be conflict that arises. Teamwork is tested in times of adversity, but being on a field hockey team teaches you to overcome barriers and push through obstacles for your teammates. Being a member of a field hockey team also teaches you how to make sacrifices for something that is bigger than yourself. As a member of team, you quickly learn there are others relying on you. You must learn how to hold yourself accountable for the sake of the rest of the team. There are pressures that along come with being a valued member of a team, which means one must be not only physically strong but mentally strong as well. You must train your mind to be strong enough to push yourself past your comfort zones and push your limits in order to improve.

Communication is another huge aspect of field hockey. Communication has two components: the actual speaking part is one but equally important is the listening aspect. In field hockey, you are required to exercise both elements. Whether you are telling your teammate to mark someone that is open in the circle or calling for the ball, you will not be successful unless the person you are trying to communicate to is listening. Successful teams have constant conversations throughout games, and it shows by the way they move off of each other on the field. Communication is also important when telling your teammate what you need from them or

what they need to change. Offering as well as accepting constructive criticism goes hand in hand with the communication element of field hockey and can be one of the more difficult parts for some players. Being opening and welcoming to criticism can set apart elite players from the others.

Field hockey is a fast-paced game that helps its participants learn how to become flexible and adaptable. In field hockey, as well as any sport, the unexpected happens. Players must quickly adjust and learn how to deal whatever circumstances come up. One of the scariest yet most rewarding parts of being an athlete is performing under pressure. Taking pressure, turning it into adrenaline, and channeling it into your play is what some athletes live for. Working under pressure is a real-world skill that can be transferred into the workplace. One of the most important lessons learned from playing field hockey is that failure happens and you need to learn how to deal with it. For some, failure can mean quitting, but when you are dedicated to your sport, you choose to learn from your failures. Playing field hockey and committing yourself to it sets you up with the building blocks to be successful in many aspects of life.

### ***My Experience***

Field hockey was never something I saw myself playing when I was younger, but I am very thankful I eventually decided to pick up a stick and try it out. I played competitive soccer and basketball growing up, so I was set on playing one of those sports in college. When I started high school, I did not have a sport to play in the fall athletic season. My dad urged me to try playing field hockey because he heard many soccer players had successful transitions into field hockey as a result of the tactical similarities between the sports. I was hesitant at first, but I took my dad's advice and tried out for the team. At my school there were only enough girls to have a varsity team, so I was fortunate enough to make that team my freshman year. I believe I picked



up the sport fairly quickly, which I attribute to my soccer background, but I did have a lot of work to do my first few years if I did want to become a college level player.

When I first started playing, I thought of field hockey as a filler sport, a sport that I could play in the fall that would keep me in shape for my basketball and soccer seasons. As I continued playing, more and more opportunities in field hockey were presented to me. I was asked to join one of the club teams in St. Louis, Missouri, AIM Field Hockey Club, in Arizona for a tournament during my sophomore year. My high school coach said it would be a good opportunity to improve as a player and play higher levels of competition. I ended up going, and that tournament was one of the major turning points for me as an athlete. When we got back from Arizona, my parents, my club coach, and I had a conversation explaining that if I wanted to play in college I could it just depended on how dedicated I wanted to be to the sport. At the time, I was still playing club soccer and going to college recruiting showcases for that team, so I had to make the decision then about what sport I really wanted to commit to. I knew I still had a lot of room to grow in field hockey, which is what eventually pushed me to choose to focus on it for my future.

I joined AIM as a full- time club athlete in the spring of my sophomore year and saw immediate improvement as a player. I was more confident in my skills and was able to step up as a leader on my high school team in my junior year. I continued to travel to tournaments with AIM and began the college recruiting process. I was realistic in my search and wanted to compete at the highest level I could while making an immediate impact on a team. There were a handful of schools, Divisions I, II, and III, that saw me play at tournaments and sent emails expressing interest. I also made a video showcasing my stick skills as well as game footage and sent it off to colleges I thought would be a good fit for me academically as well as athletically.



Some schools replied showing interest, some said they were already finished recruiting, some did not reply, and others said they were looking for a different type of player. The responses really helped me narrow down my list of schools and focus on which schools would best fit my needs. By the end of my junior year, I narrowed down my search to three Division I schools and set up visits at each school. The visits were crucial in my final decision because I was able to meet girls that were already on the team and get a feel for what it would be like to be a student- athlete on those campuses. In the summer before my senior year, I called and verbally committed to Ball State University. It is very common for athletes to commit to schools before their senior year, and it is nice to be able to enjoy your senior year rather than focusing on the college search. My senior year was my most memorable year of my high school field hockey career because I was honored with many athletic awards. Those awards truly showed me that I made the right decision my freshman year when I started playing and later when I decided to stick with the sport.

The transition from high school and club field hockey to college can be intimidating, but I was lucky enough to come in with a recruiting class of 10, so half the team was new to Ball State and the college game. One of the reasons I chose Ball State was because I believed I could make an immediate impact on the team. I wanted to be able to play as a freshman, and I trusted if I worked hard enough I could. I was able to earn a starting spot as a freshman and worked to keep my spot every year following. My first two years we were a very young team and only won 11 games between both seasons. My junior year a new head coach was appointed to turn the program around, but it ended up being the most disappointing season with a 2-16 overall record. Yet again, my senior year, a new head coach was selected, and we finally saw a positive change in the program. We ended up with an 8-11 overall record and made the Mid- American Conference Tournament for the first time in five years. I would not say I had the typical journey

as a college athlete. The main reason being I had three coaches in my four years of playing, but with all the disappointments came opportunities I never would have received had I not stuck with field hockey. Being a student- athlete taught me how to manage my time, how to prioritize, and how to deal with and overcome failure more than anything else could. It opened doors for my future, and I will continue my field hockey journey as a Graduate Assistant. I will take on a coaching role while continuing to receive an education. It is strange to say you owe a lot of your successes to a sport, but field hockey did have a big influence on my life.

## ***Conclusion***

There are a lot of aspects to field hockey and a lot of room for the sport to grow. First, more people need to understand what the sport is and the benefits that come along with it. With the help of USA Field Hockey and the programs it sponsors, field hockey can spread throughout the United States, and world- class players can be developed in places other than just the East Coast. Athletes can learn a lot of life skills from choosing field hockey, skills that will set them apart for the rest of their lives. Whether participants are playing at the Olympic level, the high school level, the college level, or just recreationally, the commitment to the game can open many unexpected doors. The sport has evolved a lot from its early beginnings and will most likely face changes in the future. There are many more championships to be won and more Olympic podiums to stand on. My biggest hope for the sport is that it becomes so prominent that “what’s field hockey?” is no longer a popular question.

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